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# Examining Early Childhood Gender Socialization Through Children's Picture Books

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**Examining Early Childhood Gender Socialization  
Through Children's Picture Books**

By

Kendra Pospisil

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

In

Sociology

College Teaching Emphasis

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Examining Early Childhood Gender Socialization  
Through Children's Picture Books

Kendra Pospisil

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# **Examining Early Childhood Gender Socialization Through Children's Picture Books**

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April 2016

This analysis examines gender representations found in children's picture books through a symbolic interactionist perspective, employing conceptual ideas produced by West and Zimmerman (1987) and West and Fenstermaker (1995). Through a qualitative content analysis of 20 picture books from the past 15 years, I examine how gender is portrayed through both human and animal characters. I find that children's picture books reflect our patriarchal society as they are male-centered, male-dominated, and male-identified (Johnson 2014). Children's picture books depict patriarchal gender portrayals and provide children with examples of gender performances that satisfy patriarchal gender norms. This research has implications beyond books; it reflects the damaging and limiting cultural representations of gender that children learn at very young ages.



## **Examining Early Childhood Gender Socialization Through Children's Picture Books**

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

As children, family members and teachers read to many of us. We may remember the first time we were able to pick up a book and sound out the first few words on our own. The books and stories we enjoy when we are young stick with us, bringing back special memories and experiences. These early books often contain stories that teach us how to share, be patient, and to be kind to others, but these are not the only messages embedded within these stories. Children's books aid in a child's cultural socialization. They teach socially acceptable behaviors, such as manners and morals, but they also lay the groundwork for gender socialization. As agents of socialization, it is important to understand how gender is depicted in children's books, as past research and the analysis here demonstrate that children's books reflect traditional and patriarchal depictions of gender.

This research uses a symbolic interactionist framework and employs conceptual ideas produced by West and Zimmerman (1987) and West and Fenstermaker (1995) to examine how early childhood literature portrays gendered behavior in traditional ways. This analysis also employs Johnson's (2014) theoretical lens on patriarchy to show how children's books are male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified. Although this study does not make claims about how children internalize gender portrayals, this framework may help explain how children use images and ideas from books in their gender performances. The purpose of this analysis is to examine representations of

gender found in children's books. Past research has focused on gender depictions found in best sellers or award winning children's books. This study examines gender portrayals in children's picture books through the analysis of human and animal characters from the past 15 years (2000-2012). I conducted a qualitative content analysis of 20 picture books. This content analysis provides a new, symbolic interactionist perspective on how gender is depicted using both human and animal characters. This is important because the representations of gender may teach children about stereotypical gender performances, thus influencing children's own gender performances. To be clear, I do not examine the actual impact that such gender representations have on child readers. Instead, I examine how children's literature authors depict gender. In the following section, I provide an overview of relevant literature and describe the theoretical background I employ before explaining my research design.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

After careful review of the literature, I have organized the literature into four categories. First, I review *Past Analyses of Children's Literature*. This section focuses on the overall stereotypical gendered behaviors that researchers have identified in content analysis of children's books. The next section is *Language, Illustrations, and Gender Stereotyping* in which describes past content analyses that center around language and illustration. Next, I focus on how gender portrayals in children's books and other media may have an influence on the way children perform their gender in the section *Effects on*



*Childhood Socialization*. Finally, I present the theoretical background I use to frame my analysis.

### Past Analysis of Children's Literature

Numerous authors have analyzed prominent children's picture books such as Horn Books (Paterson and Lach 1990), Golden Books (McCabe et al. 2011), and Basal Series Literacy school text books (Evans and Davies 2000; Witt 1996). Other authors have examined award-winning books (Anderson and Hamilton 2005) including Caldecott Award winners (Hamilton 2006; McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescosolido, and Tope 2011; Oskamp, Kaufman, and Wolterbeek's 1996; Turner-Bowker 1996) and Newberry Medal winners (Diekman and Murnen 2004). Books on the 100 Best Children's Authors list (Diekman and Murnen 2004), Notable Books for Children's list (Gooden and Gooden 2001), and parental surveys book lists (Tepper and Cassidy 1999) have also been the subject of analysis. Finally, Poarch and Monk-Turner 2001, among others, have studied non-award winning books. These authors focus on aspects such as the gender of the main and supporting character illustrations, titles, author, type of character (human, animal, etc.), and genre of the book. Paterson and Lach (1990) find that, over time, men and boys are overrepresented in titles and pictures, while main characters have nearly reached an equal representation of men and women from the years 1967, 1977, and 1987. Supporting characters remain male-dominated (Paterson and Lach 1990). The rate of women characters has increased in children's books but gender differences remain (Oskamp et al. 1996). Past studies reveal that although gender stereotyping had decreased, women characters continue to be portrayed stereotypically (Gooden and Gooden 2001). Adult

characters also have a larger unequal gender distribution compared to child characters (Hamilton 2006). McCabe et al. (2011) and Oskamp et al. (1996) also found that books based around animal characters present far more stereotypical gender portrayals than books based on human characters.

Books deemed nonsexist portray men characters with more egalitarian personal characteristics while women characters tend to be presented in stereotypically gendered ways (Poarch and Monk-Turner 2001; Diekman and Murnen 2004). Women participate in traditionally feminine leisure activities and perform to gender, such as taking care of the household. Diekman et.al (2004) and Poarch's et.al (2001) findings reveal that, although blatant sexism is no longer found in children's books, sexism remains. This may explain the fact that books considered "boy" books outsell "girl" books (Hamilton 2006). Hamilton (2006) hypothesizes that boy characters are more interesting, active, and important than female characters. Overall, Diekman's et.al (2004), Paterson and Lach's (1990), and Poarch et.al's (2001) analyses highlight that although progress has occurred, gender stereotypes continue to be present in children's picture books.

### Language, Illustrations, and Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is prevalent in children's literature. Many explore gender inequity from the perspective of language and illustrations. Analyses focus on the text of children's picture books as well as the illustrations. These authors identify that illustrations show characters portraying traditional characteristics, occupations, leisure activities, and household social expectations (Diekman and Murnen 2004; Poarch and Monk-Turner 2001). The men characters are presented doing a variety of activities, with

the exception of caring for children or the household (Diekman and Murnen 2004; Gooden and Gooden 2001). Women/girl characters are more likely to be depicted as nurturing compared to men/boy characters (Anderson and Hamilton 2005). Women characters are far more often depicted doing activities representing a traditional gender performance (Diekman and Murnen 2004; Evans and Davies 2000; Paterson and Lach 1990; Witt 1996). Traditional gender portrayals are even more visible in books where characters are animals (Gooden and Gooden 2001; McCabe et. al. 2011; Oskamp's et. al.1996).

Poarch and Monk-Turner's (2001) find that gender is often portrayed through activity, production artifacts, or household artifacts. Household artifacts include props such as cooking utensils, cleaning supplies, and gardening tools. Production artifacts include tools such as hammers, screwdrivers, and nails. Poarch and Monk-Turner's (2001) results show that men and women characters are just as likely to be depicted in leisure activities, but men are rarely presented with a household artifact versus a production artifact. Women characters are equally likely to be depicted with either a household or production artifact. Men characters are written to represent traditional, more stereotypic gender portrayals and women characters more gender balanced.

Fewer women characters are depicted alone compared to images of men characters, while girls are portrayed as more dependent and passive whereas boy characters are portrayed as independent (Gooden and Gooden 2001). Male characters are also placed outdoors more than female characters and children more than adults with girl characters' outdoors 50% of the time and women characters 41% of the time. This is in

comparison to boy characters doing 69% of the time and men characters 39% of the time (Oskamp, Kaufman, and Wolterbeek's 1996).

Researchers (Evans and Davies 2000; Anderson and Hamilton 2005) are also interested in the lack of men parental figures within the home compared to careers or roles of authority. They discovered that fathers were repeatedly underrepresented. Of the 200 books studied, 139 had parental characters. Of these 139, 128 books have mother characters while 95 books have father characters. The father characters are portrayed as being incompetent at tasks such as feeding, care-giving of children, and providing affection. In the books with parental figures, babies are nurtured ten times more by mothers than by fathers and older children are nurtured twice as often by mothers than fathers (Day and Mackey 1986; LaRossa, Gordon, Wilson, and Bairan 1991; LaRossa and Gadgil 2000; Scharrer 2001). Mother characters are also far more likely to express emotion and be involved in disciplinary actions (Anderson and Hamilton 2005). Boys are portrayed as having more traditional masculine characteristics and were more "aggressive", "argumentative", and "competitive" than girl characters. The boy characters are also far less likely than girl characters to be described as "affectionate", "emotionally expressive", "passive", and "caring" (Evans and Davies 2000).

The language used in the text of children's picture books is also significant (Turner-Bowker 1996). Men characters are more likely to be described with words associated with masculinity such as being more "potent", "active", "powerful", "furious", "brave", "assertive", "forceful", "a leader", "decisive", "dominant", "aggressive", "individualistic", and "ambitious". Women characters are written to have nearly equal amounts of masculine and feminine characteristics but continue to be described in

stereotypical ways such as being “beautiful”, “sweet”, “scared”, and “weak” (Turner-Bowker 1996). Turner-Bowker (1996) also examine how emotions are associated with characters and if they fit into socially acceptable, stereotypical gendered behavior. In contrast to Turner-Bowker (1996) findings, Tepper and Cassidy (1999) found that men and women characters are just as likely to use love/like words, as they were to use anger, fear, or anxiety words. Overall, men characters still represent more stereotypical gender portrayals while women characters are found to represent more balanced gender portrayals.

### Effects on Childhood Socialization

Researchers (Dutro 2001; 2002; Trepanier-Street and Romatowski 1999) also focus on how gender portrayals in children’s books may impact gender socialization, books children select to read, and how they play and interact with others. Dutro (2001; 2002) proposes that gender performance is done through the process of selecting books. Dutro (2001; 2002) finds that children’s book selection is gender-based and that boys use their selection as a way to define their masculinity and distance themselves from the girls in the class. Social pressure has an influence on the books they choose to read, “Specifically, these are boys' anxieties around gender boundaries; a hierarchy of masculinity within the classroom” (Dutro 2001:379). There is a lot of pressure on boys to make the “correct” selection as their performances establish their place in the gender hierarchy. Once the books deemed as masculine are all selected, the remaining boys are made to select other available books that are not seen as “boy books”. This results in loss of status in the gender hierarchy.

Several authors (Evans and Davies 2000; Gooden and Gooden 2001; Diekman and Murnen 2004; Kortenhaus and Demarest 1993; Oskamp, Kaufman, and Wolterbeek's 1996; Paterson and Lach 1990) find that women characters are portrayed as being more dependent and submissive than men characters while the men characters are found to be more independent and creative than the women characters. In other research (Trepanier-Street and Romatowski 1999), children were given a pretest and posttest before and after a story and activity. The study shows that although some stereotypical ideas remained, young children's attitudes were more flexible in their understanding of occupational and gender opportunities for men and women. These findings highlight how the books young children are reading may not only influence their play, but also their gender socialization.

Books, like movies, are powerful agents of socialization. Martin and Kazyak (2009) analyze G-rated children's films, such as those created by Disney, and their influence on children's understanding of heteronormativity. Their analysis shows that these films present unrealistic portrayals of hetero-romantic love, suggesting that such "exceptional, powerful, magical, and transformative" relationships are the solution to all problems (Martin and Kazyak 2009: 1). Martin and Kazyak (2009) also illustrate the use of the male gaze to depict sexual desire. This use of the male gaze reinforces the acceptability and assumed right of men to objectify and sexualize women's bodies for their own pleasure. Women often view themselves and other women from a male point of view and judge themselves when they fail to conform to feminine ideals promoted by patriarchal culture (Johnson 2014: 102). The male gaze also affects men's performance of masculinity, as they know that other men will be judging them based on how they evaluate women and their bodies (Grazian 2007; Johnson 2014: 57).

Similarly, Baker-Sperry (2007) studied children's peer group reactions to reading Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. The author was interested in how the children would respond to the gendered story while in the presence of their peers. Using participant observation, Baker-Sperry studied 148 first graders who were divided into reading groups and then instructed to read the popular fairytale. The author then discussed the story with the children discovering that although most children were familiar with the tale, the girls openly embraced the tale while boys did not. Girls and their peers accepted the gendered tale, enjoyed acting, and playing the part of Cinderella. Girls also identified with Cinderella's stereotypical gender performance in the film. The boys and their peers rejected the tale as a way to reinforce their masculinity and refused, in front of their peers, to admit they liked the book.

Strom (2001) completed a content analysis of commercials aimed at children. The 595 commercials the author analyzed featured either real or animated children. These commercials were selected as they played during popular children's programming slots such as Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons. Strom (2001) was interested in the activities of the children in the commercials while being portrayed in single-gendered and mix-gendered groups. The main two products being advertised in the ads studied were food/restaurants or toys. The analysis showed that there was roughly about the same number of boy children as girl children in the advertisements. When considering setting, about 12 percent of boy single-gendered commercials took place in a home or domestic location compared to 39 percent of girl single-gendered ads. Seventy percent of the single-gendered commercials were for toys, showing the influence of gender socialization in the toy selection process. The author's findings on interaction showed that girl-only

commercials were overwhelmingly cooperative while boy-only commercials were competitive in nature. When boys and girls were together, the interactions tended to be cooperative. The author found that very few of the commercials overall depicted creative play while many depicted violence and aggression.

### Theoretical Background

Symbolic interactionists argue that meaning is a social product constructed through the process of social interaction between individuals (Blumer 1969). In this view, individuals learn gendered behavior and develop gendered meaning through the process of social interaction. In turn, children often perform the representations they observe. Therefore, gender performance depends upon social encounters with others; the messages children pull from the books they read shapes their understanding of gender and what people expect of boys and girls, men and women. The socialization process requires that individuals take on ideas, attitudes, values, and beliefs of the social group in which they interact. Individuals typically perform and present their gender in certain ways in order to earn and maintain the acceptance of their peers and avoid social sanctions.

Erving Goffman (1959) maintains that the “self” is a product of our dramaturgical performances with others. Therefore, the self is not something that individuals possess but instead something that individuals create and present to others. Influenced by Goffman, West and Zimmerman (1987) offer a dramaturgical perspective on the formation of gendered selves, which they term “Doing Gender.” This perspective distinguishes between the biological status of sex from the achieved status of gender. When viewing gender as a social construct, instead of biologically driven and natural, it



is essential to view gender as an accomplishment and something that people “do” or “perform” (West and Zimmerman 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987:130) maintain, “Gender is a socially scripted dramatization of the culture’s idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well-schooled in the presentational idiom.” Men and women therefore work very hard to present themselves as fulfilling the correct image and ideologies of what it means to be men and women in their cultures. If they do not perform gender in a way deemed socially acceptable, others may hold them accountable with sanctions, such as homophobic ridicule (Katz 1999, 2006; Pascoe 2011).

Similarly, Judith Butler (1990) understood gender as a social construction, not a natural phenomenon, and worked to deconstruct it. Like Goffman, Butler views gender as an enactment that must be maintained, a concept she termed “performativity.” These performances are not done freely by individuals but shaped by cultural and historical influences. As Lorber (1994: 55) states, “A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers.” Gender performances are regulated through social interactions with others who possess similar meanings of what it means to be a man or a woman. Similar meanings allow us to use these gender markers to perform our identities in ways we wish others to perceive us (Goffman 1959). These theoretical orientations are central to my analysis of children’s picture books as I examine the way books are a medium through which children are socialized to perform gender in socially prescribed ways. If children do not meet the social standards shaped by their historical and cultural context, they will be held accountable and regulated by other agents of socialization (Katz 1999, 2006; Pascoe 2011).

A key element to gender performance is to demonstrate *difference* (West and Fenstermaker 1995). In order to enact successful performances of masculinity, boys must show not only how masculine they are, but how *not* feminine they are. Gender, they argue, “is a situated accomplishment of societal members, the local management of conduct in relation to normative concepts of appropriate attitudes and activates for particular sex categories” and “not merely an individual attribute but something that is accomplished in interaction with others.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995:21). Such performance of difference reinforces the gender binary. Boys are held to impossible standards of masculinity and taught to regulate their own and others gender performances (Kivel 1984; Pascoe 2011; Katz 1999; 2006). This process of accountability and gatekeeping maintains and reproduces gender inequality (Thorne 1989; Kimmel 1999; Katz 1999; 2006; Schwalbe et al. 2000; Pascoe 2011).

As demonstrated through past research, children’s literature largely presents stereotypical gender portrayals. Using a symbolic interactionist lens, I argue that children’s books portray patriarchal gender ideologies and may influence children’s own gender performance. In other words, children learn the socially acceptable way to behave according to their gender through stereotypical gender portrayals and therefore influence gender socialization. These picture books may act as devices of socialization that teach children gender performance. Children then may reflect their socialization and perform or “do” gender in order to meet social expectations (West and Zimmerman 1987).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

I have conducted a qualitative content analysis to address my research questions on gender portrayals in children's picture books. A qualitative content analysis analyzes the presence, meanings, and relationships of words and concepts within cultural artifacts, in this case children's picture books (Charmaz 2008). The cultural insights collected demonstrate representations of gender in children's picture books, the cultural meanings within, and show how these representations may contribute to childhood gender socialization. The cultural meaning of my sample is significant to how children may use books to shape their gender performance. Social interaction creates social meaning and gender depictions may reflect limited ways of how gender can be performed. Over all, I have analyzed 20 children's picture books from 2000-2012. Collecting a sample from the past 15 years, provided an updated analysis to past literature and illustrates how gender portrayals have changed and remained the same over time. I studied children's picture books designed for children aged three to eight because this is a significant time in early childhood socialization. This age is especially significant as books are provided by parents, guardians, and educators who are also agents of socialization.

To select my initial sample, I went to Minnesota State University, Mankato's Memorial Library. Here I browsed their collection of children's picture books and without any attention to title, author, or year published I selected five picture books. After collecting my initial sample of five books, I began the process of data analysis. Using qualitative coding to analyze gender representations in each book, I actively constructed a list of codes to identifying gender performance. I considered factors

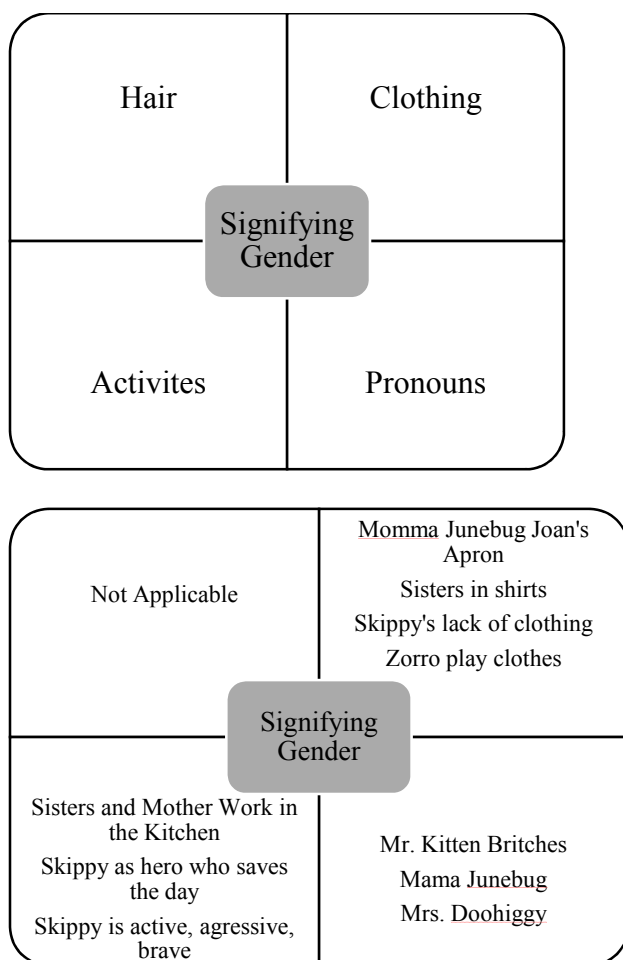
measured in past research such as characters' possessions, activities, behaviors, dress, overall appearance, and childcare.

Coding allowed me to assign key terms and specific phrases I wanted to highlight as a category of meaning (Charmaz 2008). I attempted to code as much as possible with action phrases and gerunds as this helps to avoid any biases as it depicts the actions of a characters instead of labeling their overall identity (Example is provided in Figure One). An example is using the code "Mother/Woman caring for child". This code depicts the action of the woman or mother instead of labeling women as "child caretaker". I then moved on to focused coding (Example Provided in Figure Two) to concentrate on the most frequently used and significant codes (Charmaz 2008). This process allowed me to successfully analyze large amounts of data.

**Figure One. Example of *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005) Initial Coding**

Code	Page #	Text or Illustration	Explanation
Boy main character	2	T	Boy Main Character
Animal main character	2	T,I	Boy Siamese cat "kitty boy"
Not doing what supposed to	2	T,I	Sleep with birds
Mother caring for child	2	I	Mama Junebug Jones
Clothing signifies gender	2	I	Skippy No shirt / Mama Junebug Jones wearing apron
Scolding by parent	2	T	Mom looking for him/should not be with birds

**Figure Two. Example of *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005) Focused Coding**



In the process of coding my initial data, I identified tentative interpretations about the data sample. Throughout this process, I continuously compared all codes and relied on memo-writing to reflect upon them. Memo-writing was an informal but crucial step in defining the meanings and identifying the relationships between codes. The coding and memo-writing process was a constant state of revision that allowed me to compare codes and significant meanings across my sample of picture books.

The leads deemed worth investigating revolved around the differing use of human and animal characters. In my initial sample, gender representations are different for human or animal characters. Gender varied based on what the species the main characters was as well as the combination of human and animal characters. I was also interested in how gender was physically displayed for humans and animal characters in book illustrations. Last, the use of imagination and play revealed significant differences for characters based on gender. After completing my initial sample, I began the process of collecting my theoretical sample. A theoretical sample allows you to seek data to develop a theme (Charmaz 2008). In order to do this, I drew the remainder of my sample from the eighth and ninth edition of *Best Books for Children: Preschool through Grade 6* by Catherine Barr and John Gillespie (2005; 2010). I specifically focused on the books under headings *Imaginary Animals* and *Real and Almost Real Animals*. I randomly selected book titles published after 2000 and ran them through Minnesota State University, Mankato's library search engine until finding 15 additional available books for a total of 20 books.

After selecting the remainder of my sample, I continued the process of coding and writing memos. I Identified main characters in my data which included six boy humans, 18 boy animal, 15 girl humans, and 15 girl humans. I also identified that pronouns, verbs, and adjectives are used differently depending on the gender and species of the character. Gender stereotypes and portrayals are identifiable when examining the use of language and who is being written about. Verbs will be coded into three categories: physical (e.g., ran, jumped, leaped, read), interactional (e.g., said, asked, told), and emotional (e.g., cried, laughed).

In chapter two, I use Johnson's (2014) framework of a patriarchal society—specifically the three main ways patriarchy maintains male privilege: it is male-identified, male-dominated, and male-centered. Johnson's (2014) framework allows me to demonstrate the way a modern sample of children's picture books continues to reflect the patriarchal society and traditional gender notions found in past analysis of children's literature. Chapter three employs theories produced by Erving Goffman (1959), West and Zimmerman (1987), and Judith Butler (1990). These theories allow me to demonstrate the way children's performance of gender is the product of their social interactions with others. Through the process of social interaction—in this case, the interaction among book characters—readers may learn what is acceptable gendered behavior in a patriarchal society.

Symbolic interactionists maintain that gender is socially constructed and not biologically driven and natural. Gender is an accomplishment and something that people “do” or “perform” (West and Zimmerman 1987). Judith Butler (1990) also understood gender as a social construction, not a natural phenomenon, and produced the theory of performativity in which gender is an action that people do or perform. I reiterate that gender is a dramaturgical performance, but it is the social and cultural group in which we are socialized that influences how gender is socialized to be “correctly” enacted.

## CHAPTER TWO: REFLECTING PATRIARCHY IN PICTURE BOOKS

With growing awareness of gender diversity and vast research identifying children's books as portraying gender in traditional, stereotypical ways, I expected to find more books that explored a range of gender portrayals featuring, for instance, career-ambitious girl characters and boy characters that express non-traditional traits like empathy or enjoy non-traditional activities like cooking. Instead, I found that mainstream children's books from 2000 to 2012 epitomize the patriarchal society that we continue to live in today. Although we have made some slow but significant progress, our society remains male-dominated and modern books continue to represent this aspect of patriarchal society. I found Johnson's (2014) theoretical lens of the three main characteristics of a patriarchal society to be especially useful. Specifically, I use this lens to describe the ways patriarchy maintains male privilege in the social world: it is male-identified, male-dominated, and male-centered. I will provide key examples to illustrate the way children's literature reinforces patriarchal notions of gender.

### MALE-CENTERED AND MALE-DOMINATED

Patriarchal societies are male-dominated and male-centered (Johnson 2014). The unique relationship between these two characteristics enhances my argument when discussed accordingly. I will discuss these two integral aspects together as many critical examples from my data are reflective of both characteristic. In a male-dominated society,



the majority of people in positions of authority and those making important decisions, with the exception of a few tokenized women, are men (Johnson 2014). The consequence of male dominance is a large gap in power between men and women in areas such as: work and pay (Ramsbey 1991; Bose and Whaley 2009; Jacobs and Gerson 2004, Kraus and Yuval 2000; Tichenor 2005; Write et al. 1995; Williams 1999); care work and the division of labor in the home (Hochschild 1990; Hoelter 2002; Tichenor 2005, Wharton 1994); and political and other positions of authority (Kenworthy and Malami 1999, Paxton and Kunovich 2003). In male dominated, patriarchal societies, men have the power to shape and claim all aspects of our society and are often interpreted as being “superior” (Johnson 2014:6). In my review of children’s literature, male dominance is manifested in two main ways. The first is the perspective through which the story is told. The second is the difference between the amount of boy and girl characters present in the books and the amount of these characters that are actually significant and story central.

Male-centeredness is also essential to a patriarchal society as it ensures that all the focus remains on men and boys at all times (Johnson 2014). When looking at past and current cultural artifacts, such as media, men and boys dominate and shape stories, fictional or not. They also influence how the information is interpreted by the audience or general public (Johnson 2014). Even when men or boys are not the main characters, they are often a central part of the story through their own narration or being the focus of women and girl characters’ attention. Nearly all of the stories in my sample focus on boys’ activities or made significant by boy characters (75%). I first provide specific examples from my sample to demonstrate male dominance and male-centeredness in

children's literature. I then continue my discussion by looking specifically at male identification through illustration, pronoun, verb, and adjective use.

In *Slippers at School* (2005), the main girl character, Laura, is unknowingly followed to school by her male puppy, Slippers, but the story is not about Laura. The story is about Slippers and his secret adventure in a strange school. Without him, there is no story. A large proportion (45%) of the books in my sample follow the imagined or actual adventures of boy characters and two additional books follow the adventures of a boy and girl duo (increasing this to 55%). For instance, *Fish Wish* (2000) follows a little boy imagining the adventures he would go on if he were a fish. Other books that solely follow the day to day interactions or adventures of boy characters include *Kitten's Big Adventure* (2005), *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005), *Milo's Hat Trick* (2001), *If All The Animals Came Inside* (2012), *The Copy Crocs* (2004), and *Panda and Polar Bear* (2009).

Eleven books (55 percent) from my sample are told from a boy character's perspective. About 40 percent of the sample is not told from a girl or boy character's perspective, but an outside narrative voice. Only one book is told from a girl character's perspective. This difference highlights male dominance in children's literature. It also reflects the devaluation of women's perspectives and of women's stories (Johnson 2014). We often take this for granted, but this gap must be acknowledged. In a patriarchal society, boy's voices are desired and considered more valuable, ensuring that boys and men are more likely to be heard and have their experiences internalized by readers (Johnson 2014). Although there is little difference in the number of boy and girl characters, there is a huge difference in the number of characters that I have coded as dynamic and story-centered.

In total, I identified six boy human characters, 18 boy animal characters, 15 girl human characters, and 15 girl animal characters. Showing little difference in the number of boys and girl characters. However, the equality of representation is very misleading because very few girls are identifiable as dynamic story centered characters. Story central characters are the characters that narrate their own books, go on imaginative adventures, and shape the way the story is perceived by the audience. Out of my total of significant characters, I only identify six girls versus 22 boys as being central to the story. A huge gap is also present when considering who the book is really about. For example, girl characters may be part of the main storyline and be a main character, but they often only play supporting roles to the true main character: the boy. Fifteen of 20 books are centered on male characters, while only three books are about girls. The remaining two books focus on both a boy and girl character.

One of the most striking examples of male dominance and male-centeredness from my sample is *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008). This book is about a boy dog, Alex, who is worried that he is too different to be friends with a girl cat, Lulu. The book also introduces children to the meaning of opposites. Although Lulu disagrees that she and Alex are opposites, the message is clear: boys and girls are as different as cats and dogs. Not only are the characters “opposing” genders, but also different species. This book is told from Alex the dog’s perspective and focuses on his worries and emotions. Although Alex and Lulu are both main characters, it is Alex who dominates the story and shapes how the audience interprets the situation. Alex’s position as the narrator and dominating character give him power over how the story is understood by the audience and shapes how they experience the book. This is representative of the way men, who

dominate positions of power, can use their power to shape our culture, politics, and media to be exclusive or oblivious to others situations and experiences (Johnson 2014).

In the book, Lulu is responsible for managing Alex's emotions. She ends his worries and explains that it is okay to be different and that they can find things that they have in common. However, the book still focuses on opposites. Lulu soothes Alex's fears about their friendship and plays the "mother role", calming Alex's worries and adapting her play to better suit his needs. In a true mutual friendship, both characters feeling would be addressed and both would compromise and work together to sustain their friendship. The inequity in their relationship is clear: Lulu puts Alex's needs before her own and is willing to adapt her life so that he won't have to. This is consistent with other scholars' findings on how women do the majority of such emotional labor (Cancian and Gordon 1988; Hochschild 1989; Heller 1980; Seery and Crowley 2000). Women are found to be more responsible for managing the emotions of others, especially men and children.

Alex's solution is that he and Lulu can no longer be friends. *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008) appears to be about friends overcoming their differences. After reevaluation, it is about Alex, who is the central focus in this relationship. Alex spends a lot of time thinking about their differences and thinks, "What if he and Lulu are too different to be friends?" (*Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* 2008: 12). This decision clearly bothered Alex, but he never considered a compromise; he expected Lulu to fulfill his expectations of play. When she did not meet these expectations, she was not considered a suitable friend. Ultimately, Lulu suggested a compromise and was the one who eventually made concessions. Alex never considered or tried anything of interest to Lulu.

This illustrates the reality that men (and boys) are seen as the standard and women, are viewed as the “other”. The result of Alex’s dominance is that we know little about how Lulu feels and if the situation is as upsetting to her as it is to Alex. The solution is in Alex’s favor, similar to real life policy and cultural decisions in which men control the majority of the power such as in the media, workforce, and family. Instead of coming up with a true compromise, they decide that Lulu will paint Alex’s pirate boat while he plays captain. This solution is more pleasing and centered around the male character and what he would consider a good compromise, overlooking the female character’s experience.

*Looking after Little Ellie* (2005) also illustrates both male-centeredness and male dominance. In the book, six boy mice are asked to babysit a baby girl elephant named Ellie. The title of the book leaves the impression that the story will be centered on Little Ellie. In a sense, Ellie is the main character, but when looking at this book analytically, she is not that significant. The story is not about Ellie, but the boy mice caring for her and their valued experience. This book is not about how Ellie felt being cared for and entertained by her 6 male caregivers. The male character’s perspective is perceived as far more valuable and interesting than the female characters. Similar to the character Lulu in *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008), we do not hear her experience as an elephant being cared for by six mice. Although there were multiple parents present in my sample, none of the other books are from a parent or caregivers’ perspective and no other book had only a sole male caregiver. Nine books did have both a man and woman parent and seven books had only a woman parent. Given these statistics and the lack of sole male caregivers, it is interesting that a group of male caregiver’s perspectives are acknowledged and valued.

Also interesting is that Ellie is a different species. It would have been unique enough, given my data, for a group of male mice to babysit a child mouse, male or female. Instead, Ellie is an entirely different species, far larger than they are and comically different from the mice. The story is engaging because the boy mice do not fit cultural assumptions of who an expected and “normal” caregiver is. This situation is reflective of media historically portraying father figures as “incompetent” and bumbling fools when it comes to caring for children (Day and Mackey 1986; LaRossa, Gordon, Wilson, and Bairan 1991; LaRossa and Gadgil 2000; Scharrer 2001). Fathers are assumed to not have the “natural” parenting skills mothers do and are portrayed in a very negative way. In the story, the mice succeeded in caring for Ellie but in a patriarchal society, it is the perspective of six men watching a girl elephant that is perceived as an interesting and valuable experience because it is depicted as being out of the norm.

*Night Cat* (2003) is also male-centered and from the male perspective. This book is about a boy house cat that likes to go outside at night and explore. We read his perception of what boy cats should be doing and how they should behave, “I don’t want to go to bed. I want to stay out all night” (*Night Cat* 2003:1). This perspective informs us that boy cats should be out exploring, hunting, chasing, running, and climbing. This character fits the “ideal” of what it means to be an active and even aggressive boy. He is shown hiding and disregarding his woman owner when she tries to call him inside for the night. When he becomes scared by another animal, his fear obvious visually, the character is quick to brush it off and state, “I wasn’t really scared.” (*Night Cat* 2003: 19) It begins to rain and the cat becomes cold, scared, and wet. He meows and throws a fit to be let inside. After being let in, fed, and put into his warm cozy cat bed, he retracts the

fact that he was scared or wanted to be let in, “I wasn’t really scared, but she’d be lonely without me” (*Night Cat* 2003: 31). He says that his female owner needs him and that this is the only reason that he came inside where he is safe and comfortable.

The ideal of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987; Kivel 1984; Kimmel 2006), in which men must never show weakness in fear of being labeled less than a “real” man is clear in *Night Cat* (2003). The story is about him proving himself as cat, but it is easy to replace this idea of “catness” with masculinity. The cat feels that he needs to be active, aggressive, fearless, adventurous, and dismissive of weakness. He spends the entire book trying to prove himself and avoid situations that cause him to veer away from the gender ideal he is trying to perform. He is quick to dismiss any signs of weakness, even going as far as to claim he came inside only because his woman owner needed him, completely dismissing his early unhappiness with being wet, cold, and scared.

*Night Cat* (2003) depicts a boy policing his gender performance and shows how men work to maintain their status as a “real” man. To perform masculinity “correctly,” according to our culture’s social standards, men must remain in control of their emotions, bodies, and relationships at all times in order to avoid vulnerability (Kivel 1984). The cat must show his ability to be a “man” by being tough enough to face the dark scary outdoors. He performs his masculinity by disobeying his female owner, not coming inside when he is called, chasing, hunting, and “surviving” the outdoors. His dominance and central role provides him with the power to shape and retract the story to best benefit him and the performance he chooses the audience to see. When he is scared or upset, he refuses to recognize these reactions as they would be seen as weakness. Written from the male lens, but done in a comical way, it is unclear if the author is poking fun at this type

of masculine performance or if it is done to emphasize the way masculinity is to be performed.

*If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012) focuses on a little boy imagining how his family would react if wild animals came inside their home. He imagines his family's responses in the most stereotypically, gendered ways. The author could have included his family in the imagination process and depicted them discussing or imagining their responses, but this was not what occurred. Instead, it is about how *he* sees the world—how a boy expects and believes his family members should and would react to this situation. He imagines his mother in the kitchen being very upset that the animals have destroyed her kitchen and calls them rude. The father is upset that there are animals sitting in his chair in the living room. The little boy assumes his sister would be absolutely terrified and imagines her hiding behind him as he protects and saves her. From his own perspective, he is the brave hero protecting his scared sister.

He imagines himself having a great time with the animals and is not afraid of them. Towards the end of the book, the author starts to slightly show the boy's reaction to having his home and bed invaded. It is not done so in fear or that he is upset but as if the animals have overstayed their welcome and he is weary. This is never overtly projected into the text but evident in the boy's facial reactions. Possibly, to maintain control over his masculinity, he projects his fears and worries onto his imagined sister's reactions. Fears and worries can then be safely expressed, without causing a direct threat to his hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). Again, as in *Night Cat* (2003), his dominance in the story allows the boy to shape and control the way the audience views him. He has the power to construct himself as a hegemonic male (Connell 1987).



Similar themes are present in *Mucky Duck* (2003). This story is about a little boy who is best friends with a girl duck and written from the boy character's perspective. The boy explains why she is called Mucky Duck and highlights some of the activities they do together. All of these activities reflect an active and aggressive behavior similar to what I have seen in other boy characters such as Alex (*Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* 2008), Skippy (*Skippy Jon Jones* 2005), and the Kitten in *Kitten's Big Adventure* (2005). Mucky Duck likes to cook and paint, but she does this in a very messy or "mucky" way. She is constantly dirty and making a mess. Instead of this being a problem for the boy, he is impressed and in awe of her behavior. From his perspective, a girl that gets messy and jumps in mud while being active and aggressive playing soccer is valued and desired. The little boy is able to claim her as his friend because she is not the "typical girl."

As in *Looking After Little Ellie* (2005), this book appears to be about Mucky Duck. After further examination, this book is really about the little boy and why he likes to be friends with a girl duck. Explaining how unordinary Mucky Duck is, as a duck or a girl, is interesting. This story is about the boy validating his relationship with a girl duck, and does so by describing her and her behaviors in ways that are more reflective of the other boy characters in my sample.

*Mucky Duck* (2003) portrays the boy's version of events, and his description of her behavior in relation to his own standing as a BOY playing with a girl. His masculinity is protected not only because she does like doing things that a stereotypical boy does, but she does "girl things" in a very "un-girly" way. This is essentially what he is pointing out: My friend is a girl, but it is okay because she is not like a "normal" girl. Again, this book also lacks a girl's perspective, as we are not given Mucky Duck's point of view. It

would be interesting to read this from Mucky Duck's perspective to determine if this behavior is truly reflective of her as a character or if her character employs the subordinate adaptation Schwalbe et al. (2000) termed "trading power for patronage", wherein women accept their subordinate position in exchange for some rewards, like affection from men. In this case, Mucky Duck may trade power for patronage" by focusing on the rewards she gains from her enjoyment of "boy like" activities and the friendship that comes along with it. This identity work allows her acceptance by the little boy; if she was not "one of the guys," it is doubtful that the boy would want to play with her. I hypothesize that characters like Mucky Duck and Lulu (*Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* 2008) have to be one of the "guys" to deflect subordinate status and gain self-worth (Schwalbe et al. 2000).

*Not Norman* (2005) is another example of how male dominance has an influence on the perspective in which the story is told. The little boy character is given Norman, a fish, for his birthday. The boy is very dissatisfied with this present. From his perspective, it is completely unacceptable to not have a pet that can play and be active with him. The boy states, "I wanted a pet who could run and catch. Or one who could climb trees and chase strings." (*Not Norman* 2005: 4) Norman, because of physical limitations, cannot be the pet the boy wants him to be. Initially, he sees Norman as weak or less than these other animals and he in turn seems to feel that he is guilty by association and may be seen as less than the "ideal." He decides that he is going to exchange Norman at the pet store for a pet that allows him to be physical, aggressive, and active.

*Not Norman* (2005) reflects the pressure boys feel to be active and physical to be perceived as an ideal man of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). Owning a pet that is

not reflective of this ideal, is a threat to his own masculinity. At one point in the book, the little boy plans on talking Norman up to trick one of his friends into trading Norman for his more desirable pet dog. It is as though Norman is an embarrassment to him. The main boy character does eventually change his mind and talks himself out of exchanging Norman, but the reasons are interesting. First, Norman pays attention to him and makes him the center of focus. This means a lot to him and tells Norman, “Thanks for Listening” (*Not Norman* 2005:12). Also, the little boy thinks Norman is brave, after spending the night with him in the scary darkness, and this makes him in return feel brave and tells his pet, “Thanks for watching out for me, Norman” (*Not Norman* 2005:20). From the boy’s perspective, these features are valuable and will be valued enough by his peers to be deemed an acceptable pet to a “real” boy.

*I’m Not Cute* (2006:10) is about a baby owl who becomes very upset every time another animal calls him cute and hugs him. He responds in anger and makes statements such as, “I am a huge, sleek hunting machine with great big see-in-the-dark eyes.” He complains to his mother and she comforts him by telling him he is not cute. This is what he thinks he wants, but instead, he is left with mixed feelings. Although never overtly said, he looks distressed at not being seen as cute by his own mother. Seeing this distress, his mother comforts him and tells him he is cute, “For a huge, scary, sleek, sharp-eyed hunting machine, that is” (*I’m Not Cute* 2006: 23). This book reflects gender socialization of boys and how they are pressured to maintain a stoic persona to be seen as a “real” man. The owl wants to be identified as cute and cuddly but knows this is not acceptable for a boy owl. He HAS to be scary and strong. He wants to be both, but realizes he cannot show weakness in fear of being accused of not being a “real man.” Being considered cute

by his Mother satisfied the need to be seen in a different way without jeopardizing the hegemonic image he works hard to maintain.

The book *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005) also provides examples of a patriarchy through male-centeredness and dominance. This book is about a boy kitty, as he is described, and his imaginary adventures as his Zorro-like alter ego, Skippy Frisco. Early in the story Skippy is sent to his room after getting in trouble. While there, he imagines an adventure in which he is the brave hero who saves everyone. Outside of Skippy's imagination, there are more female than male characters in the story, including Skippy's mother and sisters. Although outnumbered, Skippy is the focus of the story and even when he is not present, his mother and sisters are talking about him and making him lunch. The women's role in the story is only to add more focus onto Skippy, just as the women characters did in *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008) and *Night Cat* (2003). The women in these examples fulfill a stereotypical role as keepers of the home and male family members. These examples reflect patriarchal values and the related norms and behaviors expected of these values.

Patriarchy has a powerful influence on the voices heard in our culture. Even when girls' play an important role, it is more likely to be told by a narrator, suggesting that girls do not narrate their own stories. A girl character narrates only one out of twenty books. *Estelle and Lucy* (2001) is the only book with all women characters and is also the only book in my sample told from a girl's perspective. This book is about Estelle, the big sister, and her frustration with her little sister, who is always following her around. Estelle is one of the most active girl characters that I have coded. She is determined to make the point that she can do many things better than her little sister Lucy. Estelle is

very active while jumping around, playing, and demonstrating her abilities. She and her little sister are also illustrated helping their mother with the baking in the kitchen similar to the sisters in *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005). Also significant, Lucy, the little sister, is a mouse while Estelle and her mother are cats. I conclude this is done to further emphasize the difference amongst the two characters and support my argument that the use of different animals serves to exaggerate differences, such as gender, in books like *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008) and *Looking After Little Ellie* (2005).

The books described, provide examples representative of a patriarchal society and how male dominance and perspective provide power to shape the story to benefit male characters. The idea of not being a real man, seen as less than, or embarrassed by association is a constant occurrence in my male-dominated sample. These books highlight how difficult it is to be a man/boy in our culture and the importance of maintaining the image of what it means to be a “man” (Kivel 1984; Kimmel 2006). They also highlight the social expectation that children are expected to meet and aid in their socialization into their social group.

## MALE-IDENTIFIED

Patriarchy also ensures that our society is male-identified, meaning that men’s lives and experiences are seen as the standard and male pronouns (e.g., he, his) and nouns (e.g., mankind, chairman) are seen as representative of all (Johnson 2014). Traits deemed masculine such as strength, competitiveness, toughness, forcefulness, controlled emotions, and rationality are viewed as positive and desirable and thought to reflect societal values

as a whole. Characteristics associated with femininity such as empathy, cooperation, vulnerability, emotional expression, and compassion are subsequently devalued. Overall, male identification ensures that society views men as the standard for all other comparisons, resulting in the notion that men are superior to women. Women, and those who do not identify as male, are “othered” (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Schwalbe et al. 2000). Women are prized almost solely on their physical attractiveness and women who do achieve powerful positions are surrounded by men and culturally stripped of their sexuality (Johnson 2014). Male identification is present in noun, verb, and adjective use in my sample.

### Name and Pronoun Use

Text is also significant to male identification and demonstrates how language identifies gender (Richardson 2009). I have identified some patterns. First, all of my books use traditionally gendered pronouns and eleven books (55%) have characters with traditionally gendered names. Other names come to have gendered meaning once they used with pronouns or illustrations. Human main characters always have gendered names. Even when human characters are not main characters, or even named, their gender portrayed through illustrations such as clothing and hairstyle.

Many of the animals' names are the type of animal that they are such as in *The Copy Crocs* (2004), *Panda and Polar Bear* (2009), *I'm Not Cute* (2006), *Duck's Key: Where Can They Be?* (2005), *Kitten's Big Adventure* (2005), *Milo's Hat Trick* (2001), *Mucky Duck* (2003), and *Fish Wish* (2000). In all of the cases the animals were gendered, and all but one (Mucky Duck) of these characters are boys. Although these names (Duck,

Owl, Panda, Polar, etc.) are not traditionally gendered, they do take on a gendered meaning alongside pronouns and in the context they are used. Books like *Duck's Key: Where Can They Be?* (2003) and *Panda and Polar Bear* (2009), may only use pronouns a few times or only once, but that is enough for gendered meaning to be associated with characters. All boy-gendered animals' names are the type of animal that they are, while girl gendered animals have gendered names such as Ellie, Maya, Lulu, Estelle, and Lucy. The fact that girl animals have names highlight that they represent the "other" and therefore need to be identified as so.

### Verb Use

Like name and pronoun use, verbs used to describe characters show how characters are differentiated. While coding, it became evident that different verbs were used in relation to boy versus girl characters. I then reanalyzed my sample with verb use as the focus. I coded verbs into three categories: physical, emotional, and interactional (See Table One and Two). Examples of physical verbs are ran, jumped, leaped, and read. Interactional verbs in my sample include said, asked, told, and exclaimed. Emotional verbs include cried, whooped, and scolded. I identified 24 significant boy and 30 significant girl characters. Significant characters are characters integral to the story line and the interpretation of it by the audience. Significant characters resulted in 6 boy humans, 18 boy animal, 15 girl humans, and 15 girl humans. Verbs were used in accordance to boy characters 458 times. Boy characters were associated with physical verbs 294 times, emotional verbs 23 times and interactional verbs 141 times. Girl characters were associated with verbs a total of 268 times. Girl Characters were

associated with 166 physical verbs, four emotional verbs, and 98 interactional verbs.

Verbs are used differently for boy characters compared to girl characters.

My data supports that the stories are not about girls nor are girls and boys written about in the same way. These findings reflect cultural and societal stereotypes of men and boys, as they are often considered “naturally” more active and aggressive. Boys express emotions more frequently and tend to be more significant to the story, probably in part because there are so many more central boy than girl characters. Boy characters also talk more and participate in more in-depth ways with other characters. Verb use shows the way girl characters in my sample lack the vibrancy of their male counterparts as they do not narrate their own tales, go on imaginary adventures, or dominate their own stories. This is consistent with Hamilton’s (2006) research about how girl characters, when compared to boy characters, do not seem as exciting, entertaining, or important.

#### TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE

##### Adjective Use

I also coded adjective use (See Table One and Two). My analysis shows that 130 total adjectives were used to describe boy characters. Some of these included amazing, magnificent, brave, splotchy, cute, huge, scary, sleek, and sharp-eyed. Girl characters were only described with adjectives 40 times. Examples of this are sweet, famous, mucky, big, and small. This difference in adjective use is significant. Boys are described as brave, amazing, and magnificent. They are super heroes and are portrayed as being wonderful and deserving of our praise. The closest comparison for a girl is to be



described as famous. Again, boy characters are depicted as being more dynamic and exciting. My sample shows that it is more valuable for girls to be famous than amazing or brave. Also interesting, when girl characters are called cute or sweet, they typically accept this as praise while a boy character (Baby Owl in *I'm Not Cute* 2006) protests with all his might when he is called cute. Mucky Duck stands out as she is described with adjectives more associated with boy characters. Over all, boy characters are associated with larger frequencies of nouns, verb, and adjectives. This indicates that they are more active, engaging, and the central focus of the story. The stories they are in revolve around them and their interactions, leaving all other characters to be perceived as less significant “others.”

#### TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

Chapter Two provides a detailed account of how patriarchal values present in our culture are visible in children’s books produced within that society. The characters and stories discussed in this chapter provide endless examples of how male dominance, male identification, and male-centeredness penetrate the world of these characters and influences how they narrate, interact with other characters, and perceive themselves. This is done in three main ways: name and pronoun use, verbs, and adjectives. These factors are key to how boy and girl characters are represented differently. In the next chapter, I argue that not only are children’s books representative of the system of patriarchy embodied within our culture, but also reveal the way gender is a dramaturgical act of “doing gender” and “doing difference” that individuals must constantly maintain to be

considered “real” girls and boys (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Doing Gender, Doing Difference

While the last chapter explored how the portrayals of gender in children's books reflect the features of a patriarchal society, this chapter examines how characters "do gender" in a way deemed socially acceptable (West and Zimmerman 1987). I also discuss how characters "do difference" (West and Fenstermaker 1995), revealing patriarchy's impact on the representations of gender found in children's books. In this chapter, I will show how gender is a dramaturgical performance, continuously maintained, and represented by the storybook characters in my sample.

Goffman's (1959) Dramaturgy theory states that people's daily lives resemble actors performing on a stage. Therefore, gender is not something that individuals possess but something that people do or enact (West and Zimmerman 1987). Individuals enact gender through the "presentation of self" (Goffman 1959). In other words, individuals perform in a way that they feel will make a specific impression upon others and gain them acceptance into the social group. This process is impression management. Gender performance is, like any other type of impression management, dependent upon social encounters with others and an understanding of the social group in which individuals interact. The gender norms of the culture became part of the characters' gendered performances, continuously shaping their behaviors and decisions.

Symbolic interactionists maintain that gender is socially constructed and assigned meaning over time through historical and cultural social interactions. West and Zimmerman's (1987) dramaturgical perspective on the formation of gendered selves,

which they termed “Doing Gender,” distinguish between the biological status of sex from the achieved status of gender. As West and Zimmerman (1987), influenced by Goffman, argue: “gender is a socially scripted dramatization of the cultures idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom.” Men and women purposefully work to present themselves to satisfy the expected image and ideologies of what it means to be men and women in their culture. If they do not perform gender according to these expectations they are accountable to others for their diversion, and may face sanctions (Katz 1999; 2006; Pascoe 2011).

Judith Butler (1990) also viewed gender as an enactment that must be maintained, a concept she termed “performativity.” These performances are not done freely by individuals but shaped by cultural and historical influences. Similarly, Lorber (1994: 55) states, “A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers.” Gender markers are used by individuals to help make their gender status known. Gender performances are regulated through social interactions with others who possess similar meanings of what it means to be a man or a woman. Similar meanings allow us to use these gender markers to perform our identities in ways we wish others to perceive us (Goffman 1959).

“Doing gender” successfully in ways that grant them acceptance by their peers and agents of socialization is important, but a key aspect of this performance involves “doing difference” (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Through the process of social interaction, actors learn what is acceptable gendered behavior based on their sex, which they perform accordingly. In doing difference, men not only perform masculinity but in the process actively distance themselves from femininity—to make clear the differences

between men and women. The ability to do difference is a vital for a successful gendered performance. The messages in children's picture books reflect how to do gender and do difference in ways representative of a patriarchal society. I provide examples to demonstrate how the fictional characters in my sample are portrayed performing their gender in ways that reflect the norms of a patriarchal society.

### Illustrated Appearance

One of the most obvious ways to view gender as a performance is through characters' physical appearance. To accomplish gender, individuals follow cultural norms of dress and physical appearance (West and Zimmerman 1987; Lorber 1994). Clothing, hair length, and props used and owned by the characters in the books provide a clear image of how gender is something that must be maintained at all times. When text does not reflect gender difference, illustrations can indicate the gender of characters. All of the boys and men in my sample are illustrated wearing pants and shirts, often in colors culturally associated with masculinity.

As "others," women must be distinguished from men and boys, often through illustrated appearance (Medley-Rath 2013). Exterior presentation is essential to overall gender performance and presentation of self has a large role in the success of these performances (Goffman, 1959). Illustrations represent how authors' and/or readers' expectations for how characters ought to perform gender and demonstrates the cultural standards expected of individuals in order to accomplish gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender performance for animals is different compared to human characters. I provide specific examples from my sample that demonstrate how illustrations support

that gender is a continuous performance of “doing gender” and “difference” (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995).

Human characters are very representative of stereotypical gender portrayals in regards to clothing, hairstyle, and other physical identifiers. To accomplish gender, individuals follow cultural norms of dress and physical appearance (West and Zimmerman 1987; Lorber 1994). Human boys in my sample have shorter hair, wear pants or shorts, and dress in colors associated with masculinity such as blues and greens. Illustrations of human girl characters show them very differently as a means to “do difference” and show their “otherness” from boy characters (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Lorber 1994). No matter their age, girl characters in my sample tend to have longer hair, many have eyelashes, and nearly all are wearing dresses or skirts. They are often dressed in colors culturally associated with femininity such as pinks and purples. The physical appearance of the characters in my sample is consistent with our culture’s social construction of gender (Lorber 1994).

An interesting example of illustrated difference of human characters is in *Big Red Tub* (2004). This book is about a human brother and sister who imagine going on an extraordinary adventure while taking a bath in their red tub. Both main characters have gendered names, Stan and Stella. Although these characters are not wearing clothing, the audience is still able to determine gender due to visual hair length. Cultural ideas of appropriate hair length are identifiable as the brother has shorter hair and the sister, longer hair. The parents of the two main characters also have the same hair lengths as their same gendered children. The parents’ gender is even more identifiable and differentiated as they are both dressed in stereotypically gender appropriate clothing. The

father is wearing green pants and a red shirt while the mother is wearing a purple shirt and brown pants. The fact that the mother is wearing pants in this book is actually significant as only one other important woman character does so (Laura in *Slippers at School* 2005). This pattern of hairstyle and clothing for human characters is consistent with the rest of my sample. This includes *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012), *Night Cat* (2003), *Mucky Duck* (2003), *Fish Wish* (2000), *Not Norman* (2005), *Slippers at School* (2005), *Milo's Hat Trick* (2001), *No Place for a Pig* (2003), *Big Red Tub* (2004), and *Storm Cats* (2002).

Illustrated gender difference is also significant in books such as in *Night Cat* (2003) and *Fish Wish* (2000), in which both books only provide small glimpses of characters' physical appearance. In *Fish Wish* (2000) we are only given one glimpse of the main character, but this is enough to identify the main character as a boy, although gender is never made definitive in the text. The first page of illustration shows the back of the main character's body looking into a fish aquarium. The characters illustration shows short brown hair, a yellow shirt, and pants. When comparing this illustration to other boy characters in my sample, the character's illustration identifies him as a boy. *Night Cat* (2003) presents a similar situation. The male cat's owner is gender identified in the text as Mrs. Bundy but the image that we see of her is representative of an older woman similar to the granny image in many cartoon animations. Due to the artistic style of the illustrator, we only see the shadowed silhouette of the cat's owner, but from this, it is possible to identify her as an older woman with stereotypical facial features and bun hairstyle.

Laura, from *Slippers at School* (2005), is intriguing as her genders specified in name and pronoun use but not in clothing and appearance. Laura is the only girl human character that wears clothing more representative of boy characters in my sample. The importance of this variance is lost on Laura's other gender identification such as with her name, pronoun use, and hairstyle. It appears as though Laura's clothing is able to differ from the norm as long as the audience is still able to identify her clearly as a girl. Therefore, if other gender signifiers such as hair, pronoun, and name use, are clear and identifiable, women may be able to dress in a way that is less stereotypical with fewer social sanctions than men are.

Girl characters such as *Mucky Duck* (2003) and Laura from *Slippers at School* (2005) show instances where it is acceptable for girls to differ from the gender norm. Illustrated boy characters in my sample do not vary from gender performance even when donning play clothes. This is supported by *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012), *Mucky Duck* (2003), *Fish Wish* (2000), *Not Norman* (2005), *Slippers at School* (2005), *Milo's Hat Trick* (2001), *No Place For a Pig* (2003), *Big Red Tub* (2004), and *Storm Cats* (2002). Even in the book *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012), in which a little boy imagines the reactions of his mother, father, and sister. He imagines himself and all other characters as traditionally dressed.

Although human characters are always gender specific, not all animal characters are (*If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012), *Fish Wish* (2000), *Big Red Tub* (2004)). Humans are the main characters and the animals play only supporting roles when not gendered. Other books have both gendered humans and animals such as in *Night Cat* (2003), *Mucky Duck* (2003), *Not Norman* (2005), *Slippers at School* (2005), *Milo's Hat*



*Trick* (2001), *No Place For a Pig* (2003), and *Storm Cats* (2002) The animals in these books are gendered in text and supported by illustration. Even when a character is an animal, patriarchal values warrant that gender is identifiable and women are distinguished from men. For instance, Oliver in *Night Cat* (2003) and Slippers in *Slippers At School* (2005) are both wearing collars considered masculine, Slippers in blue and Oliver in red. Serena in *No Place for a Pig* (2003) has eyelashes and is shown wearing a sun hat complete with flowers while the bear in *Milo's Hat Trick* (2001) is often wearing Milo's hat himself. These examples suggest that illustrator's use clear gender markers to distinguish between male and female characters.

*Mucky Duck* (2003) is an interesting example of a girl characters being "othered" through illustration. Mucky Duck's gender is identified by her little boy best friend in text. He describes her as being very active, aggressive, and involved in the type of play that is more representative of the other boy characters in my sample. Although this is the case, illustrations make Mucky Duck's feminine gender identifiable. Although she is drawn using blue paint, Mucky Duck not only has eyelashes, but also is illustrated covered in pink paint and purple jelly from the activities she does throughout the book.

Gender is on occasion less visual in my sample in which the main characters are animals, and instead gendered through name and pronoun use. This lack of visual gender identifiers is not the case in all gendered animal books. Often books like *Kitten's Big Adventure* (2005), *All by Myself* (2000), and *Duck's Key: Where Can They Be?* (2005) have visual clues that identify gender. For instance, the kitten in *Kitten's Big Adventure* (2005) does not have any textual identifiers but he is wearing a blue collar. Similar is Duck, gender identified only once, with the use of one pronoun in *Duck's Key: Where*

*Can They Be?* (2005), but his gender is supported by his red truck, blue suitcase, ball, and bat. Maya and her mother (*All By Myself* 2000) are not only identified in text, but with their eyelashes. A small selection of my sample of all gendered animal books have highly detailed illustrations representing clear markers of gender and gender difference (*Looking after Little Ellie* (2005), *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2008), *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005), and *Estelle and Lucy* (2001).

The most identifiable gendered difference in illustration is in *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2005). Both characters are dressed very similar to human characters' in my sample, with Alex in a shirt and Lulu in a dress. Also gendered are their dress-up clothes as Lulu pretends to be a famous painter in a beret and apron and Alex in a pirate/sailor outfit. Similar to *Duck's Key: Where Can They Be?* (2005), Alex and Lulu's gender portrayals are supported by their surroundings and props: Alex is often depicted in his imaginary boat or surrounded by his soccer equipment while Lulu is shown with her paints, in her garden, or reading a book.

Another significant example of animals illustrated to show gender variance is in the book *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005). In this book Skippy is described as a "boy" kitty who does not wear any clothing, unless it is a part of his imaginative play in which he dresses up as a Zorro like figure. This is very similar to Alex's (*Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* 2005) imaginative play with gendered play clothing. Skippy's lack of clothing is significant, as his mother and sisters all are all clothed. The illustrations show an apron on his mother and little shirts on his sisters. Since women and girls are more likely to face policing for states of dress or undress compared to boys and men (Diamond-Welch 2011), it is unsurprising that girls would be dressed. This highlights that men are the

norm while women are the “other” and therefore need to be distinguished in some way (Johnson 2014).

A similar finding is in *Looking After Little Ellie* (2005). Ellie and her mother Flora (*Looking After Little Ellie* 2005) are illustrated in gendered clothing. The mice do not have names or use pronouns but this is likely because the story is from their point of view. Ellie the Elephant represents gender norms, illustrated in a yellow and orange romper with matching bow. She also has long eyelashes. Only Flora’s feet are showing, but from the details seen it is clear she is dressed similar to the majority of other women in my sample. Like Skippy (*Skippy Jon Jones* 2005), the illustrated clothing becomes significant when analyzing the male characters in the book. Three of the mice are identifiable as men, as they are illustrated in clothing representative to male fashion in red, blue, yellow, and orange. Interesting though, is that the other three mice did not wear clothing. The lack of clothing by some mice indicates that these mice are men and otherwise distinguished if this were not the case. Illustrations aid in identifying gender portrayals and my sample demonstrates how these portrayals reproduce women as “others” and men as the norm.

Unlike humans, many animal characters do not wear clothes to reflect their gender such as in *The Copy Crocs* (2004), *Panda and Polar Bear* (2009), *I’m Not Cute* (2006), *Duck’s Key: Where Can They Be?* (2005). Others use subtle visual clues such as collars, paint, and top hats in books like *Kitten’s Big Adventure* (2005), *Milo’s Hat Trick* (2001), *Mucky Duck* (2003), and *Fish Wish* (2000). These books support my findings of male identification as well as male-centeredness as they are seen as the norm, where women are seen as the other. For instance, male characters like Skippy (*Skippy Jon Jones*

2005) and the Mice in *Looking after little Ellie* (2005) do not wear clothing while all the women characters in these books do. The one girl character that does not fit this pattern is Mucky Duck and her name is slightly different from the rest as it includes an adjective. Besides Mucky Duck, all girl-gendered animals have gendered names such as Ellie, Maya, Lulu, Estelle, and Lucy. The fact that girl animals have names highlights that they represent the “other” and therefore need to be identified as so. Overall these images trigger cultural assumptions of gender norms and depictions. As a result, gender stereotypes persist within our patriarchal society.

### Peer Association

In addition to physical appearance, characters often perform their gender through their peer groups. My data show evidence that the characters in my sample perform gender and “difference” by associating or dissociating with other characters based on their status as acceptable companions based on gender (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). Many of the characters worry about how others perceive them. Authors show this in both overt and covert ways. Some characters worry about how their gender differences affect their ability to be friends with someone of a different gender than themselves. Other instances are covert, and depict characters managing their behaviors and maintaining control over their story in order to ensure that their gender performance is in line with what they believe to be an accurate representation of what is expected of them.

When men interact with those not deemed socially acceptable, or behave in socially unacceptable ways, others—especially men—may challenge or question their

masculinity (Pascoe 2007). In other words, individuals can be guilty by association or dismissed as being real men if they socialize with the “wrong” people. The characters in the books I analyzed provide examples as to how whom a character interacts with has a large role in the success of their gender performances. The most obvious example is *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2005). As previously discussed, Alex fears that he is too different from Lulu for them to be able to be friends. Alex enjoys physical activities like soccer and adventurous play in which he is a pirate captain. He also identifies that Lulu likes sedentary activities such as painting and reading. Alex never considers trying any of these activities in order to find common ground with Lulu; he would rather give up their friendship. When boys understand how a masculine gender identity should be performed and the significance maintaining this performance, they are not likely to diverge from limited range of activities available to men (Pascoe 2007). Other than Lulu, there are no other characters physically present in the book. No one tells Alex that he should not play with Lulu; he comes to this conclusion himself. Alex’s socialization into his social and cultural group have impacted his understanding of what and who is an appropriate friend. I theorize that they are stereotyped as “opposing” species in addition to “opposing” genders.

Through Alex’s telling of the story, boys are expected to be active, adventurous, and in charge, whereas his telling of Lulu’s interests reveals that she should be more docile and enjoy calm activities such as painting, reading, and spending time in her garden. Alex was clearly bothered by his decision that they need to stop being friends, but he never considered a compromise. He is the norm and she is the “other.” It was Lulu, not Alex, who suggested a compromise and who made concessions and changes to her behavior to

appease Alex. These gendered portrayals are present in my sample and will likely have and influence on the socialization of the children reading them. (Thorne 1989).

Consider the little boy in *Mucky Duck* (2003) who obviously enjoys spending time with his friend Mucky Duck and yet spends the entire book validating the fact that, yes, Mucky Duck is a girl, but she is a different kind of girl. He makes it known that she is the kind of girl that is messy, likes to play sports, and is not afraid of the mud. Mucky Duck varies from the traditional gender portrayal of femininity and therefore is acceptable to associate with and will not tarnish his gender performance. Other books show characters similarly validating their choice of friend.

In *Not Norman* (2005), the little boy character is given Norman, a fish, for his birthday. He is completely dissatisfied with this present, as he does not view Norman as being an appropriate pet. He spends most of book trying to convince himself that Norman the fish is an acceptable pet. I argue that the boy struggles with whether he can own a pet that cannot play and be active with him. At first, the boy sees Norman as weak or less than the other animals in the story. His behavior suggests that he in turn seems to feel that he is less than adequate due to his relationship with his fish (Katz 1999; 2006; Pasco 2007). He decides that he is going to exchange Norman at the pet store for a pet that allows him to be physical, aggressive, and active. By the end of the book, the boy finds ways to validate his masculinity. The boy realizes that Norman pays attention to him and believes Norman is brave, and this makes him in return feel brave and important. Men in a patriarchal society would view these characteristics as valuable and believe their social and cultural group will value them as well. Like Mucky Duck's friend, the boy's gender

performance is safe as long as Norman the fish fulfills his masculine gender and is thus deemed a socially acceptable friend.

*Night Cat* (2003) and *I'm Not Cute* (2006) are two more examples of how boy characters “do gender” and “do difference” (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). In order to do this, these two characters dominate the narrative and the perspective of the story. *Night Cat* is about a cat who, against his female owner's wishes, likes to go outside at night and explore. As he narrates one night's adventures, he demonstrates his version of appropriate behavior of a boy cat. Therefore, he spends the night chasing and exploring outside in the dark. He works to portray that he is physical, aggressive, and most importantly brave. Although he eventually becomes scared and wants let in, he refuses to portray that he was scared and not the perfect image of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). His male privilege allows him to reiterate the story how he chooses or more importantly, how he believes would be most socially acceptable. Men are expected to remain in control of their emotions, bodies, and relationships at all times in order to avoid vulnerability (Kivel 1984). Night cat even goes so far as to deny that he was ever afraid and wanted to go inside with his owner. If men do not maintain this persona, they risk being challenged by their social group (Kivel 1984; Kimmel 2006; Pasco 2007).

In the book *I'm Not Cute* (2006), a baby owl is upset by the way other characters treat him. He is constantly being hugged and doted on by the other animals and he is very displeased by their behavior. Just as in *Night Cat*, the owl wants to be perceived as masculine and dominating in order to be a “real” man. The cat and baby owl perform appropriate gender performance as brave, stoic, aggressive, and feared. Both examples

depict how boys are socialized. Boys may wish to be seen as cute and cuddly but know this is not acceptable. They *have* to be seen as scary, brave, adventurous, and strong. Showing weakness and any variation in the performance of gender risks criticism and disownment by their peers (Kivel 1984; Kimmel 2006).

Another good example is *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012) and *Skippy Jon Jones* (2005). The book *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012) focuses on a little boy imagining how his family would react if wild animals came inside their home. The boy imagines very stereotypical, gendered responses from his family. This character expects his family to behave in a stereotypical way often portrayed in our patriarchal culture. He imagines himself as brave and capable of handling the situation while he imagines his little sister would be fearful.

Boys are to display an image of hegemonic masculinity in order to maintain their dominance over other men and women (Connell 1987). Boys are socialized to be aware of their gendered performance and it is significant to how others will view their masculinity status as being a “real” man. The boy in *If All the Animals Came Inside* (2012) imagines himself as being unafraid of the animals. Viewing their presence as an adventure is an example of him “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). Through illustration, we are able to see the boy’s negative reaction of having his home and bed invaded. These emotions are not in fear or that he is upset but as if the animals have overstayed their welcome. Just as the baby owl (*I’m Not Cute* 2006) insists he cannot be cute, the little boy shows that he cannot be afraid. In contrast, the little boy assumes his sister would be absolutely terrified and imagines her hiding behind him as he protects and saves her.



### Activities and Interests

The activities in which the boys participate in compared to the girl characters demonstrate the way that physicality and adventure seeking are ways that boys perform gender and “do difference”. Alex’s perspective of how gender should be performed influenced his belief that his love for soccer and adventure are so far out of Lulu’s realm that they simply cannot be friends. When they compromise at the end of the book he is still in a position of authority in an active, adventurous setting as a pirate captain. His “compromise” still ensured his masculine performance. The little boy in *Mucky Duck* (2003) also loved to play soccer, get dirty in the mud, and make a huge mess with paints. Mucky Duck was included because she also enjoyed such active and “boyish” behavior.

Lulu, from *Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind* (2005), also likes to paint but she does it in a very sedate, clean, and orderly fashion. Lulu is also wearing an apron. Skippy also performs his gender through play. In the beginning of the story, Skippy’s mother sends him to his room for being bad. While there, he imagines himself on an adventure in which he is the hero and saves the day. To save the day he has to be brave, take charge, fight the bad guy, and save everyone. None of the girl characters in my sample have such imaginative experiences as the boys in my sample. Whereas many of the books in my sample follow the imaginary adventures of boy characters, there is no comparable example of this for a girl character. The only two books that follow the experience of girl is *All By Myself* (2000) and *Estelle and Lucy* (2001) and neither of these books depict an imaginary adventure led by girl character. The examples in this chapter demonstrate how gender is a dramaturgical performance in which characters actively “do gender” (West

and Zimmerman's 1987). Men and women consistently work to perform fulfilling the "correct" image. This is severely significant for both boys and girls, but boys face severe criticism and are taught to police themselves and other men when they do not perform their gender accordingly (Katz 1999; 2006; Pascoe 2011).

## DISCUSSION

In this paper, I argue that children's picture books are one of the agents of socialization through which children may develop an understanding of what is acceptable gender performance. Therefore, when exposed to these books, children view socially accepted ways to perform gender (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). While the direct impact on children was beyond the scope of this study, my analysis of children's books reveals eye-opening representations of gender that no doubt shape children's understanding of how gender is displayed. I collected a literature review that reflects upon past works in reference to gender portrayals, traditional gender portrayals, illustration, and text found in children picture books. I also developed a theoretical standpoint in which to examine gender portrayals in children's picture books through the analysis of human and animal characters. I conducted a qualitative content analysis of 20 children's picture books that provides a new perspective on how gender may be portray with differing types of characters through the symbolic interactionist lens.

There is a growing awareness and demand for children's books, media, and toys that explore a wider range of gender performance. Such books do exist, such as *Princess Smartypants* (1987), *The Paper Bag Princess* (2008), and *10,000 Dresses* (2008), but they are rarely as accessible. Instead, parents and other agents of socialization who wish to present an alternative to patriarchal gender norms must put in effort to seek out these books. My sample of children's books from the past 15 years does not represent this demand but instead continues to reflect a traditional, patriarchal society that is reflective of the society in which we live. Future research is needed on how books with a wider

range of gender presentations affects the gender performance of children compared to books, such as in my sample, that reflect patriarchal norms. My findings reflect Johnson's (2014) theoretical lens of the three main characteristics of a patriarchal society and I have provided specific details from my data to support that modern children's books are male-identified, male-dominated, and male-centered. First, in a male-dominated society the majority of authority and decision making leaders are men (Johnson 2014). Just as in society at large, men and boys in picture books have the power to shape and claim all aspects of the story and are often interpreted as being superior (Johnson 2014). This power is manifested in two main ways. First, although there is little difference in the number of boy and girl characters, boy human and animal characters dominate the narratives in my sample and shape the way the story is told. Eleven books from my sample are told from a boy characters' perspective. The other half of the sample is told from an outside narrative voice. This voice accounts for eight books. Only one book is told from a girl character's point of view. This pattern of privileging men's voices and stories is not only found in children's books, but also in movies and other media (Bechdel Test 2016).

The second way male dominance is identifiable in my sample is the difference between how many boys and girls are significant or main characters compared to the amount of boy and girl characters that are actually central to the story. My sample is also male-centered—a feature of patriarchy that ensures that the focus remains on men and boys at all times (Johnson 2014). Nearly all of the stories in my sample center around and are made significant by boy characters (75%). I only identify six girls versus 22 boys as

being significant and central to the story. No matter the gender or combination of characters, it is boy characters who the books are really about.

Lastly, male identification ensures that men's lives and experiences are seen as the standard or norm for all individuals to abide by (Johnson 2014). Male pronouns, for instance, are seen as representative of all (Johnson 2014; Kleinman 2002). Women, and those who do not identify as male, are "othered" (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Schwalbe et al. 2000). Text is also significant to male identification and demonstrates how language is gendered (Richardson 2009; Kleinman 2002). I found that all the books I analyzed use traditionally gendered pronouns and over half of the books have characters with traditionally gendered names. Other characters have non-gendered names that nevertheless take on a gendered meaning alongside pronouns and the context in which they are used.

The last chapter of my analysis focuses on the way that children's picture books represent how gender is a dramaturgical act that individuals must constantly maintain to be seen as "real" girls and boys. This chapter also focuses on how characters "do gender" and "do difference" to perform gender (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). I highlight that gender is a social construct and an accomplishment that people "do" or "perform" (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). Boy characters must perform their gender in ways deemed socially acceptable and will keep them from being stigmatized and accused of not being a "real" man by others of their social and cultural group. This chapter maintains that all social interactions across individual's lifetime are essential to their formation of self. As products of dramaturgical performances, individuals learn how to perform gender successfully to gain the

acceptance of their peers (Erving Goffman 1959). I argue that children's books are one aspect of childhood socialization through which children learn gendered behavior.

Character's physical appearance is the most significant way genders performed in children's books. Illustrations represent the standards for gender performance in order for individuals to accomplish gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). The clothing, hair length, and props used and owned by the characters in the books provide a clear image of how gender is something that must be actively created and maintained at all times. Boys diverge very little from gender performance even when they are on imaginative adventures and playing with dress-up clothing. Human girl characters are illustrated very differently as a means to "do difference" and perform their variance and "otherness" from boy characters (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Lorber 1994). As "others," women must be distinguished from men and boys; this is frequently done through physical performance. The physical appearance of the characters in my sample is consistent with our culture's social construction of gender (Lorber 1994). As a powerful agent of socialization, children may pull messages from children's picture books that may influence gender performance.

My sample also highlights how characters often perform their gender by association. That is, who they interact with and what type of activities they do, helps the characters enact particular kinds of gendered performances. Masculinity can be questioned or policed when individuals interact with those not deemed socially acceptable, such as those of the "opposite" sex or those whose gender performance are considered deviant (Pascoe 2007). The characters in my sample show that who a character interacts with has a large role in the success of their gender performances.

Physical play and activeness is also essential in boys' gender performance. The activities that the boys participate in compared to the girl characters in my sample demonstrate the way that physicality and adventure seeking are ways that boys perform gender. If performed incorrectly, the little boy's masculinity may be questioned and discredited. Although there were no specific instances of gender policing in my review of books, there were several instances where boys' behavior implied their knowledge of the threat of sanction for improper gender performance.

Over all, gender is a dramaturgical performance in which characters actively "do gender" (West and Zimmerman's 1987). Men and women in our culture consistently work to perform fulfilling the "correct" image or risk facing severe criticism. (Katz 1999; 2006; Pascoe 2011). Characters also managed their behavior through narrative control over their story in order to ensure that their gender is representative of their social and cultural group. Male privilege allows boy characters to reiterate the story how they choose or how they believe would be most accepted. At all times men are expected to remain in control of their emotions, bodies, and relationships at all times in order to avoid vulnerability (Kivel 1984). This is important because children's books may influence gender performance and the formation of gendered selves because they provide models for all kinds of behaviors, including sharing, kindness, and of course, gender.

When I began my analysis, I was unsure of what I would find. I expected some aspects, such as dress and activities, to be gendered in their representation, but I also thought with the recent demands for more variations of gender display that there may be a shift, however small, in how gender is represented in more modern children's books. This was not what my data shows. My findings illustrate that little has changed in the

way children's books depict gender portrayals for boy and girl characters. My sample is very reflective of a patriarchal society and the limited gender norms in our culture for both boys and girls.

Over all, my analysis maintains that systems of patriarchy and inequality present in our social world may be internalized resulting in continued gender disparity, sexism, and violence. This research is not only significant to those who are invested in the effects of childhood literature but anyone who is concerned with socialization, gender performance, feminist thought, and gender equality. Children's books, along with so many other cultural artifacts, such as toys, cartoons, and commercials are so much more than a simple story, piece of entertainment, or advertisement.

According to my analysis, children's books portray that our society is male-centered, male identifies, and male-dominated. Therefore, women's voices and opinions are devalued; even when they have a central role, they are viewed as "others" while men are the norm, women must change their behavior in order to be accepted by men and boys, and they are not supposed to want to be active, adventurous, or brave. Boys are supposed to be masculine and in control of themselves and their emotions at all times. They must have validation for why they want to play with a girl or have a pet that is not active and aggressive.

This research and my findings have implications beyond books; it reflects the damaging and oppressing cultural norms and limitations that persist in society. The gender portrayals presented in my sample of children's books are not a worthy inheritance to the generations to come. As a society we take for granted what messages are present in the books we use to help socialize children into our culture. As agents of



socialization ourselves, it is important to understand what messages and representations we endorse. If we are to progress forward and break out of cycles of gender inequality and sexism—both overt and covert—we must be aware of the messages portrayed in everyday cultural artifacts such as children's books.

## APPENDIX

Table 1. Frequency of Adjective and Verb Use in Children's Books

Gender and Species of Characters		Adjectives Used	Verbs Used
Boys			
	Human	5	181
	Animal	125	277
<i>Boy Total</i>		<i>130</i>	<i>458</i>
Girls			
	Human	1	113
	Animal	39	155
<i>Girl Total</i>		<i>40</i>	<i>268</i>
<b><i>Total Used</i></b>		<b><i>170</i></b>	<b><i>726</i></b>

Table 2. Types of Verbs Used to Describe Characters' Action in Children's Books

	Boy		Girl		Gender Non-Specific	
	Human	Animal	Human	Animal	Human	Animal
Physical	77	217	70	96	0	75
Emotional	5	18	0	4	0	2
Interactional	30	111	43	55	0	6
<b><i>Totals</i></b>	<i>112</i>	<i>346</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>83</i>
<b><i>Totals by Gender</i></b>	<b><i>458</i></b>		<b><i>268</i></b>		<b><i>83</i></b>	

**Table 3. Comprehensive Book List**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Illustrator (if different from author)</b>
<b>Fish Wish</b>	2000	Bob Barner	
<b>All By Myself</b>	2000	Ivan Bates	
<b>Milo's Hat Trick</b>	2001	Jon Agee	
<b>Estelle and Lucy</b>	2001	Anna Alter	
<b>Storm Cats</b>	2002	Malchy Doyle and Stuart Trotter	
<b>Mucky Duck</b>	2003	Sally Grindley	Neal Layton
<b>No Place for a Pig</b>	2003	Suzanne Bloom	
<b>Night Cat</b>	2003	Margaret Beames	Sue Hitchcock
<b>Big Red Tub</b>	2004	Julia Jarman	Adrian Reynolds
<b>The Copy Crocs</b>	2004	David Bedford and Emily Bolam	
<b>Kitten's Big Adventure</b>	2005	Mie Araki	
<b>Slippers at School</b>	2005	Andrew Clements	Janie Bynum
<b>Not Norman</b>	2005	Kelly Bennett	Noah Z. Jones
<b>Skippy Jon Jones</b>	2005	Judy Schachner	
<b>Looking after Little Ellie</b>	2005	Dosh and Mike Archer	
<b>Duck's Key: Where Can it Be?</b>	2005	Jez Alborough	
<b>I'm Not Cute</b>	2006	Jonathan Allen	
<b>Alex and Lulu: Two of a Kind</b>	2008	Lorena Siminovich	
<b>Panda and Polar Bear</b>	2009	Matthew Baek	
<b>If All the Animals Came Inside</b>	2012	Eric Pinter	Mark Brown

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